

Joint statement from Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus Njongonkulu Ndungane and Archbishop Thabo Makgoba

The three living Archbishops of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa have issued an unprecedented joint statement appealing to people across Southern Africa to beat the coronavirus by working closely together.

The text of the statement follows:

The three of us, as former and current Anglican Archbishops of Cape Town, welcome and encourage the strong evidence we are seeing of all Southern Africans working together to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus across our sub-continent.

If proof was required of the oneness and interdependence of the human family, the threat posed by this virus – and people's response to it – is providing it. To stop the virus spreading will demand fundamental changes in the behaviour of all of us.

The virus has no boundaries – it cuts across all communities, rich and poor, in north, south, east and west. Only mutual love and care for one another will get us through the crisis.

But there is no need to panic. As President Ramaphosa has said, we do have the knowledge, the means and the resources to fight this virus, and if we act quickly and collectively, we can limit its effects. We are resilient and in the past we have overcome challenges by remaining calm and being strategic in our responses.

To young people we say we know you are not scared for yourselves, and some of you may feel that coronavirus is not an African problem. But you might be carriers of the virus without even knowing it. So we appeal to you not to put at risk the lives of those who cared for you when you were children. We know that you are being asked to sacrifice the most for your old people. But please protect those of your parents' and grandparents' generation.

Let us take the opportunity to respond by choosing life over death; by choosing knowledge over ignorance; by sharing that knowledge; and by caring about others through taking care of ourselves.

As President Ramaphosa has also said, this epidemic has the potential to bring us closer together. But, in his words, it demands “cooperation, collaboration and common action. More than that, it requires solidarity, understanding and compassion.” We know that we can rely on people of all faiths and of none to bring those qualities to this struggle.

May God bless Southern Africa, and God bless all her people,

**The Most Revd Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town
The Most Revd Njongonkulu Ndungane, Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town
The Most Revd Thabo Makgoba, Archbishop of Cape Town**